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ELLIS ISLAND FROM THREE POINTS OF VIEW

I.

BY FLORA A. GRAHAM

The quota of nurses from Base Hospital 33 celebrated Washington's Birthday by entraining at different points for mobilization at Ellis Island, New York. About twenty came from Albany, others from Schenectady, Troy, and some from cantonments where they had been in Army service, while waiting for mobilization. Those of us from Albany were given a very pleasant ovation at the depot by the Red Cross and by our many friends who gathered there to wish us the best of luck. We were generously supplied with bon bons, fruit and flowers and everything our friends could think of to cheer us on our way.

We marched to the train carrying United States flags, the gift of the Red Cross, while the band played that most popular air, "Johnny Get Your Gun." We had a pleasant, uneventful trip and reached our destination about six o'clock in the evening, a very tired, travel-worn group of women. We were immediately ushered into the dining room where we enjoyed our first Army dinner. In fact, we have nothing but good reports to give regarding the food provided for us during the three weeks we have spent here; it is clean, wholesome and abundant, much better than we would have expected. After dinner we were shown to our dormitories, large, commodious rooms, each one accommodating about twenty nurses. We lost little time in getting comfortably settled and so our first day in the service of Uncle Sam passed pleasantly, and as our beds were very comfortable we were soon in the land of dreams.

We are situated on Island No. 3. This group of islands, numbered 1, 2 and 3, has connecting bridges over which we walk many times each day, to our meals, to the post and to the ferry boat landing.

The administration offices are on Island No. 1. There is also an immense hall where the Y. M. C. A. very kindly provides amusements three times each week for soldiers and sailors; an invitation has also been extended to Army nurses. These amusements consist of motion pictures, lectures, popular and patriotic songs, and are largely attended and very much appreciated. On one occasion I noticed that the boys were especially enthusiastic over the song, "Mother, Bid Your Baby Boy Good-bye." The screen picture was Tom Sawyer, and it gave us all great pleasure.

All aliens entering the United States, whether cabin or steerage passengers, must pass through Ellis Island and while formerly these

were inspected and examined on the island, a new Act of Congress, which went into effect February 5, requires these examinations to be made on shipboard, or at the steamboat dock, prior to landing. Consequently, the service of a large corps of officers is required. Under normal conditions these number about 650, including 150 medical officers and hospital attendants. The hospital is on Island No. 3 where, also, are large pavilions reserved for mobilization of Red Cross units. There are several units here at present and all are being rapidly equipped for overseas service. The equipment is fine and complete, also very good looking, and we are very proud to wear our new spring suit with its insigna of honor.

We have been very nicely entertained by different organizations. The Red Cross of New York gave us a tea at the Central Club for Nurses, where we were addressed by Miss Maxwell of the Presbyterian Hospital and by Miss Hilliard of Bellevue, both of whom impressed us with the importance of our mission and with the idea that the honor and dignity of our profession and of our country depend largely upon us.

We are especially indebted to the clergy of St. Paul's chapel for the patriotic services for Army nurses, which they have so kindly provided for us; these include a most excellent course of conversational French lessons by Professor Bars; also instruction in community singing under the direction of Dr. and Mrs. Reid.

The faculty of Fordham University also deserves our highest commendation and gratitude. Through the courtesy of Father Fortier, dean of the School of Sociology and the graduate school of Fordham, a large number of our nurses are given one hour's tuition in French, daily, under the most excellent instruction of Madam Mulholland, wife of the Registrar of the University.

In conclusion, I wish to say that while we are all well, comfortable and content, we are waiting eagerly for the order to embark on the little quartermaster tug, which will convey us to the ocean steamer *en route* for our duties in the Great War.

II.

BY JEAN HAVILAND

"Are you going to Ellis Island?"

The outgoing ferry boat was due to leave her slip. Unmistakably I *was* bound for Ellis Island, for the boat docked nowhere else, so why the question?

I turned, to look into a pair of pretty, intelligent brown eyes. The rich brogue saved her from criticism and made a place for her

in my heart, while I made room for her beside me. We were both on our way, both due to report for Army nursing duty, having regularly sworn our allegiance to Uncle Sam and his service. Strange to say, we had been assigned to the same Base Hospital (the United States likes "colleens" too).

Our hesitation as to direction on leaving the ferry boat was relieved by a charming little lady from Missouri, who seized my heavy suitcase and went ahead to show the way. I like Westerners, too, and my heart warmed to this one in her attractive uniform. It seemed she, too, was one of us, although having been sworn in and outfitted some days or weeks before, she was due to sail immediately, and I saw her only once again before she marched away in line to board the lighter,—so dignified and womanly and sweet they looked, that nursing contingent, passing, with measured tread, the middies standing at attention, while the other fellow's sister left, to do "her bit" for him or them.

We were duly greeted and our papers examined in the office of the chief nurse, and we began to realize how small a "bit" ours was after all, when we knew that we were only two out of hundreds constantly coming and going, with perhaps only time for equipment before sailing.

The dormitories were surprisingly spacious and airy, the food and dining service all that could be expected, perhaps more, and the general atmosphere of the place permeated by a spirit of cheer and helpfulness that must inevitably make for the broader outlook and the realization that we are all as *one* in this great strife, absolutely dominated by the desire to help where our special capacity can best be used.

The wonderful system of outfitting crowds of nurses, ranging all the way from "small thirty-two" to "large forty-four," seems to be perfect and we were soon arrayed in garments military, proud of the uniform, the Red Cross, and our glorious country. We are happy and serious and hopeful; a little fearful, maybe, lest we may not match up with what Army duty requires of us, but we feel assured of the support and sympathy of our wonderful Chief Nurse, together with the positive recognition of our undivided efforts to put everything across in the way she expects us to.

We, too, are "sailing shortly" for duty "over there," and in our hearts is a warmth of feeling for Uncle Sam and his courteous and appreciative staff on Ellis Island, that will remain with us for years and help us to become useful women in our country's service.

III.

BY GLENNA LINDSLEY BIGELOW

On February 21, 11 A. M., Unit No. — received orders from Washington to proceed at once to Ellis Island for mobilization. So the sword has fallen at last upon our awaiting necks!

After an excruciating half hour at the dentist's, I proceeded to the War Building for my immunity papers, which will prove conclusively to the world that there is not a thing on earth I can catch. Fancy not being able to catch anything! What shall I do to evade a court-martial if I do not catch the last boat to the Island some time? But I have not been to the Island yet. In fact, I had to ask the Sergeant how to get there and he said: "Why, just find the Barge Office and go there." I thanked him gratefully and set out for the B. O., where, upon arriving, I was suddenly confronted by a very chic soldier-boy who presented arms right in my face. Luckily, I had convincing papers, for several people were looking on and I should have disliked to have the affair a fiasco. He let me pass, however, and whispered under his breath, like a ventriloquist, that it was a very cold day, and no one but I knew he was saying anything. I, then, sympathetically inquired, without opening my lips, how long he had to stay on duty and he mumbled back, "Four o'clock, thank God!"

Several feet farther on I became aware of a meek and lynx-eyed individual, who asked in a velvet voice if I were a "Red Cross," to which I answered nimbly, "Yes," getting his meaning at once, and he offered me a pass without further questioning. He did not even ask where I was going or if I wanted to go there. I think he was very unsuspicious, for I had a little black bag in my hand and a pink kimono wrapped up in my muff which, as usual, I could not pack in at the last moment.

The pass let me in through a narrow door to a narrow room. I cannot say that the people I found in there had a happy aspect; in fact, they all looked rather strained and uncomfortable and I wondered if it were the fault of the pass which, like mine, was unsolicited and signed for Heaven knows where; I had not even observed its direction. The only person who looked at all complacent was an Irishman who wandered around with a clay pipe in his mouth, upside down.

Presently a bell rang, a chain jangled, and we were herded upon a ferry boat bound for the "Isle of the Lotus Eaters," maybe, though I doubt it. Tomorrow I will tell you if I arrived at a place that ever could be forgotten.

At 3.30 P. M. we made port and were led through corridors and



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Uniform of Army Nurse Corps, Used Also by Reserve Nurses of the Red Cross

corridors to the supreme head of affairs, from where I was finally conducted to the sleeping quarters of the nurses. These consisted of one large ward with twenty beds in it. Oh, what a feeling swept over me! Twenty empty beds! I felt as though twenty people had recently died in them.

In the twinkling of an eye, or at least in a few hours, the whole aspect of the dormitory was changed and the twenty beds had twenty interesting proprietors, though we were all like probationers again, fearful of doing the things that we are not supposed to do; then our chief nurse's assistant came and detailed, in fluent phrases, the awful sins we could commit, unwittingly. When she had finished, I felt completely demoralized, as if there were a rout all along down the line.

At 5 P. M. we went to dinner, after having crossed a viaduct and achieved a bewildering journey through a maze of corridors and blind alleys to Island No. 1.

Ellis Island, that "Isle of Tears," as it is called, that harbor for all undesirable humanity which floats in from foreign shores, is really composed of three islands. We live in the contagious hospital on Island No. 3. But what of that? Nothing can infect our ardor for we are en route for "over there" by a big ship which is spotted and striped from gunwale to funnel like a rearing zebra that goes leaping out to sea.

February 22. It is an odd feeling to wake up in the morning, dragged from sleep by the thirty-eight enquiring eyes of one's room-mates. After looking each other over we had a moment to spend on the scenery. The dormitory is all windows and surrounded by water, except the staying end which attaches us to the main building. It is like a ship at sea but, *Dieu, merci*, a steady one. As a matter of fact we are as cozy and comfortable as possible here, with good beds, plenty of heat, and unlimited hot baths, and we like it. It is an enviable experience, or preliminary rather, to the first line hospitals at the front; but we will like those, too. How well I know!

At 7 A. M. we turned out and put on all the clothes we could, for it was bitter cold, and walked an eighth of a mile to the dining room. For breakfast there were fried eggs, apple sauce, potatoes and coffee. Like the immortal *Oliver Twist*, I boldly asked for a second cup and was refused.

Roll call at 9 A. M., the dividing line between the attached and the irresponsible. We are Uncle Sam's nieces now and proud to tears to enroll in the ranks of his great army. In the light of his kindly eye, in the strength of his high resolve, we are incomparably favored.

On the ferry to New York, this afternoon, we saw one of those camouflaged ships, which was painted in great waves of imagination

from the very water's edge to the tip of the smokestack; I do not know what "Fritz" will think when he sees it, but it reminded me of a typhoon in the Indian Ocean, or whales' tails lashing the air.

Tuesday. Unit — went, *en masse*, to the tailor's to be measured for uniforms. It was a wearying process to select, from three hundred identical costumes, one that would need the least altering for each individual figure. The fitters were very amiable until about lunch time, when one of them insisted that a certain coat was all right until his client (a Social Service nurse who had picked up some stray phrases in the Ghetto) spoke to him in Yiddish and then he discovered that it was all wrong and marked it up and down and all over with his chalk.

A hurried lunch for us and then to the rubber man for Sou'westers. It is true he was as pliable to every suggestion as his name implies until we, ourselves, did not know what we wanted. At last, however, we were rigged out with rubber coats and slickers which would fit us for any cod-liver oil advertisement.

Then off to Coward's for boots. Is it not rather terrible that the American nurses must go to war with Coward imprinted on their soles? But Flanders' mud may transform them and thank goodness, anyway, for paradoxes. The boot store was pandemonium and it took more than two hours to convince anybody that we knew where we were going and what we wanted to go in, as regards foot-covering. As a matter-of-fact, we did not know either, so we took what was offered and straggled home in disorganized squads. Home? Yes, home to Ellis Island, the first stop en route to France.

Wednesday. No roll call this morning. Evidently, that is not as important as a trip to Hoboken where we all had to go for identification cards and finger prints. I feel as if my "fate was hung around my neck" surely now.

After this episode, we all filed into another room, small and stuffy, where were a glaring electric light and a huge camera. A "fleisiger Berthe" (big Krupp gun) would not have been more formidable. However, each one in turn sat down before the dreadful object while two dozen companions uncompromisingly criticised her camera expression. Then, "Smile and look at me," from the operator; click, and the thing was done. In exactly seven minutes the picture, dripping from its acid bath, was finished, developed and printed. And as the Scotch woman said when she saw her first photograph, "It was a humblin' sight."

Shopping, shopping every day now for little things we did not realize we needed and which, eventually, amounted to \$50.00; a collapsible rubber basin, some hairpins, a novelty money bag and a

few ink tablets—how in the world can that amount to \$50.00? But the money is gone and we have not the time to care. The days in town are really hectic and one has not time even to read the war news, a fact which suddenly occurs to you one evening when you are hurrying to get the boat, so you run back a few paces to buy a paper and, incidentally, miss the 7.30 P. M. ferry to Ellis Island. The interim is three and one-half hours.

At 10.45 P. M. as you are seated patiently in the waiting room, somebody shouts that you will get the boat in the park (Battery Park); perfectly convinced that the world has gone mad, you, however, follow the crowd into the garden and find that saucy "Immigrant" snugly moored up against the sea wall.

One of the nurses in a frantic attempt not to miss the cutter one night, accidentally, put her foot into the void between the pier and the boat and narrowly escaped disaster. That did not distress her, however, for she was not afraid of drowning, but she might have lost her pass. That is the most terrifying thought here. Miss Jorgensen, chief nurse, who has been so good to us, has impressed profoundly on our minds the crime of losing a pass, with the subsequent necessity of explaining to Colonel K., commanding the port of embarkation.

Saturday night. The dormitory is the most amusing place in the evening, when all the nurses come back from town, their wares heaped high in their arms. It is a veritable Grand Street, when all the coats and dresses are hung up on the frames over the beds and bundles strewn all around. Articles are bought, sold and swapped, appraised, depreciated and cornered. Shylock would find some kindred spirits in the atmosphere of our little Rialto and his glittering eyes would certainly approve our spirit of bargaining. By the way, we have a feminine Harry Lauder among us, whose Scotch burr caresses the ether with a subtle touch. She is the most optimistic of people and, when the conversation hovers about U-boats, her only concern is whether Providence or sticking plaster keeps the sailors' caps on their heads.

Some of us went over early to take the ferry this morning. We saw Unit — embark. It was a tremendously impressive sight; the sky was blue and the sun shone brightly on the little procession of fifty nurses who looked so dignified and smart in their dark blue uniforms. They emerged from their quarters, marched silently along the quay of Island No. 3, and over the bridge to the chapel on Island No. 1 when we lost sight of them for a moment. Soon they came out of the building and marched, two by two, toward the little tender which was to take them out to their ship.

Their leader carried the flag, furled. That mass of color, crushed in her arms, made me tremble with emotion. It was like a tinge of blood, a dart of flame, an imprisoned thing seeking freedom.

It happened that a company of sailor boys, out for morning drill, was drawn up at "attention" right at the gang plank when the Unit embarked, which added tremendously to the impressiveness of the picture. But the silence was terrible; no fanfare of trumpets, no admiring friends, no flowers, only the grimness of parting. The little boat shrieked out a warning, warped away from the pier and silently disappeared around the Island.

Friday. We received our equipment today. Great packages and hundreds of boxes came over from New York on the ferry. We stood up in line alphabetically to receive our consignment and marveled at the order and dispatch with which that great pile of things was dissipated. Every person's name was on exactly the right box, in exactly the right place, so that there was no confusion and, presently, we found ourselves back in our dormitory, staggering under our load of gifts. It was like an individual Christmas tree all around, and we are immensely grateful.

Too much praise cannot be given the ladies of the Red Cross for their untiring work, and I wish I could express to all those kind people how sincerely appreciative we are.

We realize what really hard work it is and how monotonous the packing of those kits must become after the novelty has worn off.

It is true that we, the nurses, have the excitement, the change, the danger perhaps, while they are getting the dull end of war, the stay-at-home part, which is always the hardest, and we bless them, every one, for these unnumbered comforts which will smooth our way "over there."

Some interesting facts as to its industrial operations have been published by the British War office. Its stock of cloth and flannel would go seven times around the world at the equator. The War office turned out 250,000,000 yards of material a year. About 1800 tons of crude glycerine, extracted from the waste food of the Army, has been sold to the Ministry of Munitions at £59 a ton, about \$295.00. Under the old system the tin for jam rations alone required as much steel every month as would build a 300-ton ship; by using a wood-pulp board, 60,000 tons of steel a year are saved. 270,000,000 meat rations were sent to the Army last year and 84,000,000 pounds of tea.